DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 048 RC 019 306

AUTHOR Cohen, Michael J.
TITLE Green in Green: A Study of Inner Disconnection, Its Implications and Rectification.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 11p.; In: Cohen, Michael J. Well Mind, Well Earth. World Peace University Press, 1993; see ED 364 805. Figure 1 is printed in colored ink.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Color; Holistic Approach; Language; Outdoor Activities; Psycholinguistics; *Semantics; *Sensory Experience; *Stress Variables
IDENTIFIERS *Green (Color); Nature; *Self Awareness; Self Observation

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the long-term effects of assigning cultural symbols to one's natural sensory experiences. Sixty-two Washington State residents of differing occupations, ages 16-51, participated in the study. Participants' responses to the question, "When did you first learn the color green?" fell into two main categories. Some participants remember associating the word "green" with their green sensation. Other participants recognized that they naturally knew green (greenness) as a sense or sensation at birth or before. The participants were also asked to quickly read the colors on a color chart list in which the ink colors did not correspond to the color names. The overwhelming tendency was for participant's to read the colors as words rather than as colors. Many participants attributed some of their personal stress and conflicts to their learned inhibitions about communicating their natural senses and feelings. Participants never experienced stress on the last word on the list, the word "green" written in green ink. This study suggests that our culturally trained, language dominated, new-brain way of knowing tends to stress us when it overrides our inherent inner nature (old-brain). However, a comfortable sense of wholeness prevails when new-brain language symbols correctly identify and support our inner nature. Outdoor nature-connecting activities are suggested and described. Contains 10 references. (KS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 404 048

Green In Green:

*A Study of Inner Disconnection, Its Implications and Rectification**

Michael J. Cohen, Ed.D.

The World Peace University
Box 4112, Roche Harbor, WA. 98250
(206) 378-6313

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael J. Cohen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

*Published in *Well Mind, Well Earth* by Michael J. Cohen, World Peace University Press 1993

RC 019306

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

Through a series of questions, the reader as well as participants in this study identify their old-brain and new-brain ways of knowing. When given an exercise that challenges them to bring to consciousness their old-brain knowledge, they experience conflicts and stress. Both disappear when language is introduced that correctly identifies and brings into awareness their old-brain knowledge. The study examines its implications and contains a sampling of activities that sustain the stress reduction process.

Many researchers validate that a human being's inner nature consists of multiple senses. At least 53 different natural senses in people have been identified (Cohen 1993, 1993A ,Sensory 1992). They include senses like sight, color, thirst, nurturing,, place, community, motion, language, reason, consciousness and touch., Aspects of each sense pervade the natural world,. In the Fall of 1992, we conducted a study of 62 Washington State residents of differing occupations, ages 16-51. Its object was to determine if we could model the long term effects of assigning cultural symbols to a person's natural sensory experiences.

We invite the reader to participate in this study. To do so, from your own memories and thinking, respond to the study's questions and exercises as well as to the participant's responses included here.

Part One

1. Answer the following question from your own experience if possible, or otherwise from your best thinking about the question.

Question: *When did you first learn the color Green?* If you can't remember the specific incident write when and/or how you think you or other people learned the color Green. Write your response here:

Participants responses fall into two main categories. Place a check mark next to the responses below with which you agree and/or write in your own additional response:

A. Some participants remember when they learned to associate the word *green* with their green color sensation,, thereby knowing green by its *name or label* :

( ) "My parents told me that the name for the color of the grass and trees was *green*." ( ) "I learned green when I learned the names of crayons." ( ) "I learned green by using coloring books, and from my teacher."

B. Some participants recognized that they naturally knew green (greenness) as a sense or sensation at birth or before:

( ) "I was born knowing green." ( ) "I remember that I could sense and distinguish the green grass from the blue sky even though I didn't know the names of their colors." ( ) "My parents didn't teach me to know green, I inherited that ability from nature or God." ( ) "Green is part of my inherent sensitivity to color." ( ) "My biological attributes include the ability to register green and many other colors. Many other forms of life, including insects and microorganisms also have this ability." ( ) "Green usually signals food and aliveness. It's the color of chlorophyll. I know it genetically." ( ) "Knowing green is part of my inner nature, even a newborn infant knows green."

From these responses we recognize there are at least two ways that we believe we "know" the color green:

A.. The biological, inborn natural color sense (sensitivity) to green (greenness)

B.. The word-symbol *green* which labels that sensitivity.

2. Three participants had unique responses to the question that deserve attention.

A. When Carol was an infant learning to talk, her father used her as an experiment. He purposely taught her that the name for the color green was *orange* and the name for orange was *green*. Today she is 34 years old and still gets confused when naming these colors. She still tends to call orange *green* and green *orange*. Carol often "thinks about" and "figures out" the correct terms for these colors rather than automatically knowing them.

B. As a child, Mary Ann learned the colors red and green together as "Christmas colors". Today, at age 31, she still gets them mixed up and has difficulty calling each of them by their right name.

C. John was dyslexic as a child. He was told that he was color blind because he could not properly name the colors he saw. In actuality, he believes that he could distinguish the difference in the colors, but he had trouble applying the right words to them.

Participants' responses to A, B and C:

"I'd feel stupid if I couldn't tell red from green, how does it make you feel?" "It's fascinating that after all these years you still have the problem. Does it affect you?" "It shows how strong our bonds to words can be and how difficult it is to break them." "I have a similar problem identifying my left from my right, when I'm stressed I have no idea which is which."

Question: What do you think and feel about the color Green? Responses "It's the grass, the first color I remember seeing as a child." "I love it." " It makes me feel alive, like springtime." "It's the color of chlorophyll, of life as we know it." "I feel joy when I see it or think about it." "It's the vitality of trees , mountains and fresh air." "It gives me a rush, a strong feeling of aliveness" " Green is the color of nature. I have a sacred feeling about it." "It conveys time to me, three billion years ago green algae flourished in the ocean." "I makes me feel like I'm home." "Green is beautiful, its wilderness, the spirit of natural life."

From early in our lives, our formal and informal education conditions us to bring the world into our awareness by labeling it with language abstractions -words, symbols and images- and knowing the meanings of these abstractions. Usually two different natural sense groups lying in two different parts of the brain are at work when we "know" something natural like the color green (Samples 1976):

1. Our natural *sense of color* lying in the large, anciently evolved "old-brain" enables us to *experience color as a unlabeled sensation or feeling*. The old-brain registers non-language tensions, sensations, feelings and emotions It makes up approximately 87% of the brain and is the home of 51 sense groups including color, touch , taste, smell, temperature, thirst, nurturing, belonging and many other natural sensations. Most of our old brain sensitivities we inherit from and share with the plant and animal kingdoms (Cohen, 1993, Murchie 1978). In the natural environment they provide

a non-languaged, interspecies communion. It permits natural systems to organize, preserve and regenerate themselves without producing garbage, war, or insanity.

2. Our senses of *language* and *reason* lie in our smaller, more recently evolved, "new-brain (cerebral cortex)." It knows greenness as *the correct word or label* (like the word "green") *for sensory experiences*. The new-brain makes up about 13% of the brain. It creates, experiences and processes culturally trained language arts such as words, numbers, symbols , logic, abstractions and stories.

Summary of Part One.

1. The ancient *sense of color*, lying in the old-brain, enables us to naturally register green color as a sensation by the time we are born. This sense experiences green directly as "greenness", as a non-language, unadulterated, unedited, unmediated sensation/feeling experience. The old brain brings to awareness how we feel and is often called our *inner nature, inner self* or *inner child*. When we operate from the old brain we say we are being *emotional, sensitive, childish, feelingful, subjective*.

2. In the more recently evolved new-brain, the senses of *language* and *reason* are trained (educated) to apply cultural words, labels or stories to the natural senses. We teach the new brain that it is reasonable to know greenness as the written or spoken word *green*, or *verde* (Spanish) or *vert* (French) or other words in different languages. The senses of language and reason mostly lie in the cerebral cortex. When we operate from them we are being *literate, cerebral, sensible, abstract, cognitive, educated* or *thoughtful*.

Our cultural upbringing emphasizes and trains us to rely on our new brain *reasoning* and *language* senses and the stories they create. People that use these senses and stories well are considered educated and intelligent. They often become leaders. People who use these senses poorly are often considered illiterate , stupid or emotionally disturbed. Notice that by this definition, in the stories of our culture's adult world a newly born infant and its natural sensate/feeling intelligence could be considered "illiterate, stupid and uncivilized" for it has not been culturally trained to excellently relate through its senses of *language* and *reasoning*. However, Carl Jung and many others note, "Our feelings are not only reasonable, they are as discriminating, logical and consistent as abstract thinking

Part Two

We asked each of the 62 participants to call upon their *inner nature*, their inborn, non-language, inherent sense of color, to express itself, to do its natural "inner child" thing. To accomplish this we asked them to have their new-brain reasonably call upon their inner nature, their old-brain, and report in language what their inner nature sensed .

The vehicle we used for this purpose is the list of color names found in figure 1. The words naming the colors were written in different colors inks (for example, the word "green" was written in red ink). Use

Figure 1 as follows: *Quickly* go down the color chart list and say aloud the ink colors, not the color names. For example, the first color is red, not orange.

ORANGE	-color in with red ink
RED	-color in with purple ink
BLUE	-color in with black ink
BLACK	-color in with blue ink
BROWN	-color in with yellow ink
YELLOW	-color in with green ink
PINK	-color in with orange ink
GREEN	-color in with green ink

Figure 1

As a control for this task, we asked participants to quickly identify blocks of identical ink colors that we painted on a separate page. When using figure 1,although every participant, except one, had no difficulty identifying blocks of colors, all participants, with two exceptions, had difficulty quickly identifying the ink colors when they spelled out words. The overwhelming tendency was for participant's new-brain *culturally trained sense of language* to dominate and, out of habit, read the colors *as words* rather than as *colors*. In addition, when doing this activity quickly, over 40% of the participants spoke a written *color name* aloud but actually believed they had said the *ink color*. For example, in the fifth item in figure 1, Paul believed he had read the ink color correctly even though he said the word *"brown"* while seeing the color yellow. If another person had had not been with him and caught the the error, Paul would not have known that he made it. It's similar to you, the reader, perhaps not noticing that the words "the" and "had" were doubled in the previous sentence until I now alert you to this fact. The difference is that Paul lost awareness of a vital sensory signal from his inner nature, not simply a typographical error .

Participants reactions to this exercise included:

> "The color chart experience captured how our new-brain language/reasoning training tends to overwhelm natural aspects of ourselves." "My habitual dependency on using words buried my sensory inner child. I had trouble expressing my natural ability to recognize green in a non-language way." "When I use inaccurate words, I lose contact with an important natural part of myself and it gives me conflicts. "I feel uneasy about my ability to concentrate and be accurate" "I can't believe how I saw the color black and without even knowing I did it, I said the word blue instead." "The exercise makes me realize how important it is for me to consciously make room for my natural non-language way of knowing and for other people's observations of me." "It brought to mind that Nature within and about me is a non-language experience."

Reactions from the two persons who experienced little difficulty with this activity were:

> "Through years of therapeutic meditation, I have learned to be able to concentrate on what I sense non-verbally and to disregard the language-thinking signals in my mind." "I have been diagnosed as a person who does not pay attention to what I sense or feel. I mostly work from what words say to me. In this exercise, the instructors told me to say the ink colors, so I did. "

When we asked the other participants why their inner nature had difficulty doing this simple task, they concluded that from early in their lives they learned or been "trained," "conditioned" "programmed" or "educated" to read and value words, not colors. They observed that their new brain *language and reasoning* had been so habituated to register and express words and ideas that now it automatically "mediated," "edited" "devalued" "buried" or "overshadowed" expressing sensory signals from their inner nature. For this reason they had to work at unburying them. Most participants expressed some anxiety about having this habit without knowing it. Most showed genuine concern that they had, to some extent, lost the power to express their inner nature when they wanted to.

Participants seemed unaware that a cause of their inability to express their inner nature is that the average American spends over 95% of his or her life indoors. We spend almost 18,000 critical developmental childhood hours in classrooms alone. Collectively, we spend less than one day per person per lifetime in tune with the non-languaged natural world. We live over 98% of our nature-estranged adult lives abstractly knowing the natural world through detached *stories about it* rather than through intimate *enjoyment of it*. Our estrangement from nature restricts our natural connections from growing and strengthening. It disconnects us from a world that Thoreau observed to be "A civilization other than our own."

Many participants attributed some of their personal anxieties, stress and conflicts to result from their learned inhibitions about communicating their natural senses and feelings. They said they learned to feel anxiety about their true inner nature feelings. Their natural sensations and feelings often seemed out of place in parent's and teacher's new-brain stories such as "expectations, "norms" "excellence" "responsibilities" and "reality." Many participants recognized that they internalized these authorities in their mentality and felt stress from these internalizations. Left unattended, such stress produces disease and dysfunction.

Participants never experienced "difficulty," "tension," "conflict" or "stress" on the last word on the list, the word *green* written in green ink. In all cases, "Green" written in green ink felt different than did the other color words. In addition, when the chart was turned upside down, the written words became less legible and less difficulty was encountered in identifying the ink colors. Obviously, non-English speaking people and illiterates would have little difficulty saying the ink colors.

Summary of Part 2

Sensations and feelings are facts. Our inherent old -brain natural senses are facts as real as rocks, oceans and gravity. Reading the names of colors written in inks of a different color discloses that society stringently trains and programs our new-brain language and reasoning senses to the point that they override our inherent inner nature callings and hide them from our awareness. This change-resistant, irritating subconscious process produces feelings of disconnectedness and inner stress whose source we may not see or understand.

Teaching our new-brain to reasonably take the time to acknowledge our natural senses brings our inner nature and its natural connectedness (*Green* in green) into awareness. The process awakens good natural feelings, reduces inner conflict, and unifies our relationships with the natural world and its workings.

Overview

Participant's reactions to the whole exercise were: "I learned that I've been conditioned to overlook the expression of my inner self." "My upbringing estranged me from nature." "After more than three decades of exposure to the correct names for colors, Carol and Mary Ann still had difficulty applying them. It shows just how deeply we bond to our words, stories and beliefs and how difficult it is to change our programming." "What I inherently sense in a non-languaged way is as important and true as what I've been taught, yet I've been trained to overlook it" "The comfort of *Green* written in green ink exemplifies a value of calling our inner nature by its right name. Doing so sustains our inner harmony." "I feel frustrated. It helped me see how stress can arise between our inner nature and our language stories, especially when the stories seem accurate." "We value and emphasize learning and communicating through language, not what we naturally sense and feel." "My senses and feelings are facts." "The exercise let me see just how much my upbringing has disconnected me from my inner nature" "It helped me differentiate my language and thoughts from my sensations and feelings." "If I only know things through language and reasoning, I can become estranged from enjoying the aliveness and beauty of greenness, of nature within me and around me." "The exercise is significant because it shows that not only do we learn to overwhelm or bury our inner nature with words and concepts, but we do it without even realizing it. It's frightening because since we do it without knowing it, we can't express our true inner nature even if we want to."

This study suggests that our culturally trained, language dominated, new-brain way of knowing tends to stress us when it overrides or demeans our inherent inner nature (the little child within us). Excessively emphasizing our new-brain functions separates our awareness from natural values and wisdom that lie in our inherent, sensory old-brain attributes. These values include the natural messages, connections and enjoyment we might get from consciously, reasonably commiting ourselves to spend time seeking and seeing the color green or other natural sensations. We must learn to teach ourselves and others how to enjoy and validate our sensory inner nature.

The study shows that a comfortable sense of wholeness prevails when new-brain language symbols

correctly identify and support our inner nature (exemplified by the last color, *green* written in green ink). It insinuates that experiences which validate and strengthen *"Green* being written in green ink" could be useful in reducing personal stress and conflict.

Recommendations: The use of nature-reconnection activities.

The color chart activity is one of 97 nature connecting activities used by counselors, educators and mental health workers to catalyze *Green* in green. The activities counteract the adverse effects of the estrangement of our 53 natural senses from the natural world and each other. In backyards or back country they teach the new-brain to discover, validate and respect the old-brain's nature(Cohen, 1993). The process moves participants. We see significant improvement in their self-esteem for they discover that nature's perfection outside themselves flourishes within them. The following 4 activities introduce the process. Note: We enhance new-brain learning by journaling and discussing thoughts, feelings and reactions that arise from doing the activities.

Activity 1. Natural Old-Brain Connecting: In order to strengthen your non-languaged inner nature (for example, your old-brain sense of color), go into a natural area (park, backyard, wilderness) and for five minutes minimum, without using language or reason, connect your non-languaged, sensory inner nature with the non-languaged natural world, the nurturing "mother" community where your sensory powers originated and evolved. Do this by simply sensing natural attractions there (colors, moods, textures, motions, forms, variations, touch, taste, smell, sound etc.) *without assigning terms, words or ideas to the experience*. This is old-brain connecting. If you find your mind drifts to thoughts or to labeling the natural area, block it from doing so by repeating the word "non-languaged" over and over again as you sense the area..

Activity 2. Validating Natural Connecting: While doing Activity 1, if you feel the desire to label (new-brain connect) to the attractions that call to you, label the *natural connecting process*, not the objects themselves. Focus on the whole of the natural attraction experience, not on just the attractive natural object or atmosphere. Do this by calling each attraction *a connection experience"* For example, if a leaf attracts you, call the leaf attraction *a sensory connection with the leaf*. If a bird's color, motion, or song attracts you, also call it *a connection experience*. Other sensory terms that participants have used to describe these natural sensory connection-attraction experiences include: *loves, feelings, spirits, sensations, intuitions, bonds, callings, resonances, affinities, Higher Power, blessings, affections, natural wisdoms, joys, atmosphere, God, devas, facts, openness, etc*. Each of these sensory connection terms correctly identifies our experience (*Green* in green) when a natural attraction calls to us. The terms feelingfully bring the natural sensory connection process into new-brain language awareness rather than disregard it by singularly symbolizing the object as a noun. This process enables the new-brain to register and validate the existence and spirit of sensory connections as well as how they feel.

Activity 3. Natural Attractions Feel Good: While in a natural area, repeat Activity 2 with the following

addition: Notice that each time you sense a natural attraction it feels comfortable (enjoyable, good, nice, fun , beautiful, supportive etc.). Validate this experience and your sensory self by putting it into words (new-brain) such as "I am a person who enjoys sensing natural attractions." Recognize that this validation is like writing *Green* in green ink.

Activity 4. Integrating: While in a natural area, read aloud the validations you wrote in Activity 3. Note that you feel comfortable reading and writing your validation; you enjoy seeing or hearing in language (new-brain) what is valid and true about your sensory inner nature (old-brain natural senses) and their connectedness to the natural world. Validate your enjoyment. When it feels comfortable and makes sense to you, write and/or say to the effect that "It feels good for my new-brain to validate my old-brain's sensory nature and its sensitivity to natural attractions." "I am aware that I gain enjoyment by letting my reasoning-language abilities validate my inner nature and its connections with the natural world." These validations feel good because they are *"Green* in green." They integrate our languaged and non-languaged ways of knowing and being as well as give added value to natural areas.

Activity 5. Summarizing: Write down what for you are the three most important things you learned by doing these activities.

Conclusions

Language-reason disconnections from the natural world and our sentient inner nature make it difficult for to fully experience and express natural feelings. For this reason, our lives may feel stressed and lackluster causing us to excessively crave nature's spirit, grandeur and peace or artificial substitutes for it. Sensory nature-connecting activities have shown to help reverse this phenomenon.

References

Cohen, M. J. (1993). ***Well Mind, Well Earth:*** *97 Environmentally Sensitive Activities for Stress Management and Self Esteem,* Box 4112, Roche Harbor, Washington. World Peace University Press.

Cohen, M. J. (1993A). Counselling With Nature: Catalyzing Sensory Moments That Let Earth Nurture. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK. Carfax Publications.

Sensory (1992) Reference list:

Murchie, G. (1978). *Seven Mysteries of Life*, Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin.

Pearce, J. (1980). *Magical Child.* New York, New York: Bantam.

Rivlin R., & Gravelle, K. (1984). *Deciphering The Senses.* New York, New York: Simon and Shuster.

Rovee-Collier C. (1992) Infant memory Shows The Power of Place, *Developmental Psychology*, March. Quoted in Science News, vol. 141 No. 16 p.244, Washington D.C.: Science Service

Samples, B. (1976). *The Metaphoric Mind*, Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Sheppard, Paul (1984) *Nature And Madness* San Francisco, California: Sierra Publications. .

Spelke, E. (1992) Infants Signal the Birth of Knowledge, *Psychological Review*, October, 1992 as quoted in Science News, November 14, 1992, Vol 142 p. 325, Washington D.C. Science Service.

Wynne-Edwards (1991) Ecology Denies Darwinism, *The Ecologist*, May -June, England.